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DeLay Departs, Leaves Legacy of Egregious Ethics Violations and Strong-Arm Tactics

Washington, DC - Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee, today commented on the departure of former majority leader Tom DeLay after 21 years in the House of Representatives.

"Tom DeLay's tenure in the House of Representatives has been synonymous with corruption," Rep. Slaughter said. She added, **"From influence peddling to vitriolic rhetoric and strong-arm tactics, DeLay consistently acted in a manner unbecoming a member of Congress."** □ □

"In addition to his high-profile transgressions, DeLay ushered in an era in which constant, unabashed abuse of the democratic process by majority members became the status quo. This is DeLay's legacy, and it will linger under the present GOP leadership

until concrete reforms are made."

"DeLay's departure constitutes the last opportunity for this flailing Republican leadership to change the way business is done in Congress before November.□ Such a change is desperately needed, and long-overdue."

"DeLay leaves Congress as the most corrupt and admonished member in recent history.□ He has severely damaged the reputation of the House, and with it the interests of the people he claims to represent."

BACKGROUND:

A bipartisan House Ethics Committee admonished Tom DeLay unprecedented four times by unanimous votes from 1999 to 2004.

- **K Street Project (1999)** - Tom DeLay was admonished for threatening Electronic Industries Alliance for not hiring a Republican as its president. The Ethics Committee itself initiated this investigation. Source: "
[DeLay For Threatening Trade Group](#)
," The Washington Post, May 14, 1999. [Ethics Panel Chastises](#)

- **Westar Energy (2004)** - Admonished for creating at least the "appearance" that Westar Energy executives were provided special access at a West Virginia golf retreat as result of \$25,000 in corporate contributions to Texans for a Republican Majority, a political group affiliated with DeLay. At the time of the retreat, the House was about to consider an energy bill that Westar hoped to influence. A complaint filed by former Rep. Chris Bell (D-TX) initiated this investigation. Source: Memorandum to Members of the House Ethics Committee. Link www.house.gov/ethics/DeLay_memo.htm

- **Texas Redistricting (2004)** - Admonished for using government resources for a political undertaking. Delay's staff contacted the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) during the 2003 Texas redistricting battle to obtain information from FAA databases on the whereabouts of Democratic Members of the Texas House who had fled Austin in a plane for the purpose of denying the House a quorum. A complaint filed by Bell initiated this investigation. Source: Memorandum to Members of the House Ethics Committee. Link www.house.gov/ethics/DeLay_memo.htm

- **Medicare Bill (2004)** - Admonished for offering to endorse Rep. Nick Smith's (R-MI) son, who would be running for Congress, on the House floor in exchange for Rep. Smith's vote in favor of the Medicare/prescription drug bill. The Ethics Committee itself initiated this investigation. Source: Investigation of Certain Allegations Related to Voting on the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003. Link www.house.gov/ethics/Medicare_Report_Cover.htm

- **Allegations of laundering corporate money to Texas state campaigns (2005)** - In 2004, the House Ethics Committee was asked to investigate Rep. DeLay for allegedly using his political action committee, Texans for a Republican Majority (TRMPAC), to launder corporate money to Texas state campaigns in 2002, a violation of state law. The committee decided not to take action on the complaint until after Travis County (Austin), Texas District Attorney Ronnie Earle completes his investigation of TRMPAC activities and until indictments against his associates in Texas are disposed of. Source: Memorandum to Members of the House Ethics Committee. Link www.house.gov/ethics/DeLay_memo.htm

. DeLay himself was indicted by a Texas grand jury in September of 2005 on a charge of conspiring to violate political fundraising laws stemming from these allegations re. laundering of corporate contributions in Texas state campaigns, forcing him to step aside from his leadership post as the Republican Majority Leader. USA Today, September 28, 2005

- **Accepting illegal gifts of foreign travel, lodging and an exclusive golf outing from convicted felon super lobbyist Jack Abramoff.** Although DeLay listed the nonprofit

National Center for Public Policy Research as the sponsor of a \$70,000 trip, Abramoff reportedly had actually solicited checks from two of his clients, the Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians and eLottery Inc., to pay for the trip through the nonprofit group. Two months after the trip, DeLay helped kill legislation opposed by the tribe and the company. Source: "[Probe of Abramoff and Nonprofits' Money Opens; Senate Finance Committee Seeks Records on Trips by Reps. DeLay and Ney, Donations to Indian Tribes](#)"; The Washington Post, March 17, 2005.

- **Taking trip to South Korea with other House Members and staff funded by Korea-U.S. Exchange Council**, a business-financed group created with the help of a lobbying firm headed by DeLay's former chief of staff. The Council is a registered foreign agent, and House rules state: "a Member, officer or employee may not accept travel expenses from a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal." Source: "[S. Korean Group Sponsored DeLay Trip; Visits May Have Broken House Rules](#)"; The Washington Post, March 10, 2005.

- **DeLay and his top associates indicted by a Texas grand jury in a campaign finance probe (September 2005):** Tom DeLay was indicted by a Texas grand jury in September of 2005 on a charge of conspiring to violate political fundraising laws stemming from these allegations concerning laundering of corporate contributions in Texas state campaigns, forcing him to step aside from his leadership post as the Republican Majority Leader. [USA Today, September 28, 2005]. The investigations into these money laundering allegations also led to several other indictments in Texas which included indictments against Jame W. Ellis, DeLay's top political fundraiser and John Colyandro, the executive director of a Texas political action committee that DeLay organized to orchestrate a Republican takeover of the Texas House in 2002. [R. Jeffrey Smith, "Indictments Added in GOP Fundraising Case," Washington Post, 9/14/05]

- **DeLay aide and Abramoff Associate Michael Scanlon pleads guilty in conspiracy of bribing public officials (November 2005):** Michael Scanlon, a former partner of lobbyist Jack Abramoff and a former DeLay aide plead guilty to conspiring to bribe public officials, a charge growing out of the government investigation of attempts to defraud Indian tribes and corrupt a member of Congress. [Pete Yost, "Ex DeLay Aide Pleads Guilty In

Conspiracy," AP, 11/21/05]

- Super lobbyist Jack Abramoff, a close and dear friend of Tom DeLay, pleads guilty to fraud, public corruption and tax evasion in a federal court in Washington, D.C.

(January 2006) : Tom DeLay once described super lobbyist Jack Abramoff as one of his "closest and dearest friend." [Jeff Shields, "GOP's best friend could be its nightmare," Philadelphia Inquirer, 11/7/05] Mr. Abramoff plead guilty to fraud, public corruption and tax evasion in January of 2006, setting the stage for prosecutors to begin using him as a cooperating witness against his former business and political colleagues. In exchange, Mr. Abramoff faces a maximum of about 10 years in prison in the Washington case. He also plead guilty to fraud and conspiracy in a related Florida case in connection with his purchase of the SunCruz casino boat line. [Anne E. Kornblut, "G.O.P. Lobbyist to Plead Guilty in Deal with Prosecutors," The New York Times, 1/3/06].

Abramoff received 5 years 10 months for his role in the Florida case involving purchase of casino-cruise ships. He faces the prospect of at least a few additional years in prison when he is sentenced in a separate case in Washington, D.C. [William Branigin, "" The Washington Post, "Abramoff Gets Minimum Sentence," 3/29/06]

- DeLay Top Aide Tony Rudy pleads guilty of conspiring with convicted felon

Abramoff to block legislation in exchange for money (March 2006): Tony Rudy, a top DeLay aide while he served as House Majority Leader, took payments from Abramoff in 2000, then helped stop an Internet gambling bill opposed by Abramoff's clients. He plead guilty to fraud charges and violating the one-year lobbying ban faced by former government workers. AP Report, 3/31/06].

House Republican leadership's efforts to protect and cover up DeLay's ethical transgressions; DeLay's accuser attacked by House Republicans for filing complaint charging ethics abuses:

- Attacked former Congressman Chris Bell for filing an ethics complaint against DeLay, the first in seven years:

Republicans attacked former Congressman Chris Bell for filing an ethics complaint against DeLay, the first ethics complaint filed in seven years. DeLay went so far as to call Bell a "partisan stalker." His lawyer, former Republican Rep. Ed Bethune, accused Bell of libel and tried to initiate contempt of Congress hearings against him. Rep. LaHood (R-IL) immediately proposed legislation that would have blocked

legitimately elected, standing members such as Bell from even filing complaints. Rep. Doolittle (R-CA) went as far as threatening that the Republicans "are going to have to respond in kind" comparing it to a matter of "you kill my dog, I'll kill your cat." This retaliatory campaign on the part of Republicans was designed to damage the credibility of the ethics process and further discourage Members from filing complaints with the Ethics Committee. ["DeLay to Be Subject of Ethics Complaint; Democrat's Wide-Ranging Charges Break Unwritten Truce Between Parties," The Washington Post, 6/15/04; "Shooting the Messenger," Houston Chronicle, 11/22/04; "LaHood Blasts Ethics Charges Like Bell's," Roll Call, 6/17/04; "Ethics Panel May Face Busy Lamé-Duck Session," Roll Call, 10/12/04]

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House Republicans kept changing ethics rules to protect Tom DeLay:

- **Changed House ethics rules to let a complaint die in the Ethics committee:** Changed House ethics rules to let a complaint die if the ethics committee cannot decide whether it should be investigated within 45 days.

["Warning: Ethics-Free Zone," The Washington Post Editorial, [3/14/05](#)

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- **Changed House ethics rules to allow a Republican veto of ethics' investigations:** Changed House ethics rules to allow a party to block an ethics investigation by voting along party lines, thus denying a majority vote to allow it to proceed.

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After Retreat, G.O.P. Changes House Ethics Rule," The New York Times, 1/5/05]

- **Facing intense public scrutiny and pressure from Congressional Democrats**

Republicans reversed their own rules changes designed to protect DeLay: House Republicans did an about face by reversing their changes in the aforementioned ethics rules in April of 2005, after facing an intense pressure from House Democrats led by Leader Nancy Pelosi, Rep. Alan B. Mollohan (D-WV), the ranking member of the House Ethics Committee, and Rep. Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY), the ranking members of the House Rules Committee.

House Republicans changed internal party rules to protect Tom DeLay:

- Changed an 11-year-old conference rule that required party leaders to step down from their leadership post if they were indicted by a state grand jury: On Nov. 17, 2004, the House Republican Conference voted to change an 11-year-old party rule that required party leaders to step down from their leadership post if they were indicted by a grand jury. Their action came shortly after Texas district attorney Ronnie Earle indicted three of DeLay's associates on charges of violating state campaign laws. The conference reversed itself on Jan. 3 and reinstated the rule. [Richard Simon, " *GOP Backs Off on Ethics Changes*", Los Angeles Times, 1/4/2005]

House Republicans Purged the House Ethics Committee to protect DeLay:□

- **Removed Chairman of the House Ethics Committee who oversaw three admonishments of Tom DeLay:** Speaker Dennis Hastert removed Rep. Joel Hefley (R-CO) as chairman of the Ethics Committee that oversaw three admonishments of DeLay in 2004. Prior to his removal, Hefley said of Republican colleagues he would not name: "They said I was hurting my career here. The implication is that some form of retribution would be taken." Hefley also told a newspaper after the third DeLay admonishment: "I've been attacked; I've been threatened." [*Ethics Panel's Chair Is the Toughest Seat in the House,* The Washington Post, 1/7/05; *Hefley: 'I was threatened',* The Hill, 10/13/04]

- **Replaced two members of the Ethics Committee who both admonished DeLay and voted against the Republican Conference rule changes to protect DeLay:** Replaced the two members of the Ethics Committee, Rep. Kenny Hulshof (R-MO) and Rep. Steve LaTourette (R-OH), who both admonished DeLay and voted against the Republican Conference rule changes to protect DeLay, with two Republican loyalists, Rep. Lamar Smith (R-TX) and Tom Cole (R-OK), who both contributed to DeLay's legal defense fund. *Ethics Purge,* The Washington Post, February 5, 2005]

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- **Fired several longtime committee staffers:** Rep. Doc Hastings (R-WA), who replaced Hefley as Ethics Committee chairman, fired several longtime non-partisan committee staffers, including John Vargo, the staff director and chief counsel, and Paul Lewis, a counsel. Both Vargo and Lewis had been working on the committee since before Hefley was its chairman. [*"Critics Slam Hastings' Dismissal of Ethics Staff," Roll Call, February 17, 2005*]

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REPUBLICANS STALLED ANY INVESTIGATIONS OF DELAY AND OTHER SCANDALS ENGULFING DOZENS OF HOUSE REPUBLICAN LAWMAKERS:

- **GOP Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings Stalling on DeLay Probe:** In April, House Ethics Committee Chairman Doc Hastings had pledged to launch an immediate probe of Tom DeLay if Democrats agreed to cooperate with him and allow him to organize the Standards of Official Conduct Committee, as it is officially known. Rep. Hastings has now changed his tune, delaying any possible DeLay probe by saying, *"We're going to start all over."* [Alexander Bolton, *"DeLay probe put into limbo," The Hill, 12/14/05*]

- **GOP Leadership Scheduling longer Recess to Buy DeLay Valuable Time:** The GOP leadership scheduled the second House session of the 109th Congress to begin on Jan. 31, 2006 - that is, after a holiday break of more than a month, and two weeks after Senators are due to return to Washington. The late start will give indicted former Majority Leader Tom Delay valuable time during which his money laundering case in Texas can be resolved. As new leadership elections will not occur until the House is back in session, Republicans had hoped their maneuver would allow Mr. DeLay to reclaim his former position. [Ben Pershing, *"House Plants to Sit Out January,*

Roll Call

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[12/7/05](#)

, Rick Klein, "House Republicans quietly pushing for new leadership," the Boston Globe,

[12/7/05](#)

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